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MINUTES OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SELECT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 19 September 2023 at 7.00 pm

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Luke Sorba (Chair), Luke Warner (Vice-Chair), Yemisi Anifowose, Liz Johnston-Franklin, Jack Lavery, Hilary Moore and Jacq Paschoud.

APOLOGIES: Clive Caseley, Bryan Strom, Monsignor Nicholas Rotheron and Rev. Erica Wooff

ALSO PRESENT: Pinaki Ghoshal (Executive Director for Children and Young People), Sara Rahman (Director of Families, Quality and Commissioning), James Lee (Director of Communities, Partnerships and Leisure), Ruth Griffiths (Head of Access, Inclusion and Participation), Susan Rowe (Lewisham Education Group and Lewisham Black Parent Forum), Kehinde Onasanyo (Young Advisor), and Micah Spence (Young Advisor).

ALSO PRESENT VIRTUALLY: Councillors Edison Huynh, Oana Olaru and Liam Shrivastava, Patricia Garner (Interim Head of Integrated Adolescent Safeguarding Service), Spike van der Vleit-Firth (Programme Lead for Jobs & Skills), and Simon Spearman (Deputy Principal Vocational and Quality, CTK Aquinas Sixth Form).

NB: Those Councillors listed as joining virtually were not in attendance for the purposes of the meeting being quorate, any decisions taken or to satisfy the requirements of s85 Local Government Act 1972

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2023

RESOLVED

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2023 be agreed as an accurate record.

2. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED

That the following declaration be noted:

- In relation to Item 4, Cllr Moore declared that she was a governor at Lewisham College and the Assistant Principal of The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London, which was part of the Capital City College Group. Cllr Moore received remuneration for her role as Assistant Principal.

3. Early Help and Serious Youth Violence

Witnesses

Councillor Chris Barnham, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Pinaki Ghoshal, Executive Director for Children and Young People
Sara Rahman, Director of Families, Quality and Commissioning

James Lee, Director of Communities, Partnerships and Leisure
Patricia Garner, Interim Head of Integrated Adolescent Safeguarding Service

Key points from discussion

- 3.1. The Director of Families Quality and Commissioning introduced the report.
- 3.2. The Director of Communities, Partnerships and Leisure explained that the Council and Safer Lewisham Partnership's recommitment to their existing public health approach to tackling youth violence had been somewhat delayed while they awaited regulations implementing the Serious Violence Duty, although it seemed the approach was aligned with the Duty.

The Committee and its guests put questions to the witnesses. Key points raised in response included:

- 3.3. The core tenets of the public health approach were providing safe home and external environments, reducing exclusions from school, promoting good attainment, delivering targeted support where required, and reducing childhood trauma.
- 3.4. Existing resources were being used to develop improved data insight, including demand modelling, drawing on data on young people in the pre-MACE (Multi-Agency Child Safeguarding) process, in care or on Child in Need or Child Protection plans, engaged with Youth Justice or accessing Turnaround.
- 3.5. Forty-four young people had entered the criminal justice system in the previous year. No more than five had been in custody at any one time.
- 3.6. Wherever they were detained, young residents were tracked and supported by the Council.
- 3.7. Between January 2019 and September 2020, the young people at highest risk of exploitation were aged 13-17 and over 55% of young people referred for multi-agency support were Black, over 75% of whom were male. As of December 2020, 31% of the borough's population were from a Black or mixed-ethnicity background.
- 3.8. Between April and November 2020, 209 people were identified as victims of county line exploitation in Lewisham, Bexley and Greenwich. 84% of those young people were Lewisham residents, 64% of whom were aged 18-25.
- 3.9. One in five young people identified as being at risk of childhood exploitation was a looked after child, while one in three had mental health concerns or learning difficulties. Such young people had often suffered Adverse Childhood Experiences, such as domestic abuse.
- 3.10. The Council had successfully accessed funding from the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit.
- 3.11. The Integrated Adolescent Safeguarding Service had been created to provide a simplified pathway for at-risk young people, where previously there had been a number of separate services with overlapping roles. The former Youth Justice Board had been largely focused on youth justice partners. The new Service would be more preventative and involve a broader range of partners, including substance misuse, primary health, schools and mental health services.

- 3.12. Children and Young People's Services had very helpful, supportive conversations with the Mayor of London's Office and was having increasingly helpful ones with the Police. As a result of the former, the possibility of a mentoring programme for at-risk young people was being explored.
- 3.13. The therapy hub which worked with the Youth Justice service users was to be expanded to provide support for young people at risk of entering the criminal justice system. Some funding had been identified from mental health partners.
- 3.14. While the report focused on targeted services, it sat within a broader set of approaches to support all young people in the borough, such as Family Thrive, Family Hubs and support delivered via schools.
- 3.15. Pre-MACE panels considered how best to support young people with identified needs. Family Hubs would provide families with guidance on the support available. The new Adolescent Board would identify gaps in services and help young people access them.
- 3.16. Mental health link workers were now located in the Violence Reduction Team in recognition of the traumas faced by some young people and the challenge of transitioning from children's to adult's services. A GP-led youth clinic provided mental health support to which young people could refer themselves; referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services was less straight forward, but the Council hoped to work with the NHS to simplify this.
- 3.17. The Integrated Adolescent Service was working with the Police to develop their understanding of the support available for young people. A programme of training, support and information for Council services was being developed. How the Family Hubs could be used to enable voluntary and community sector organisations to deliver support was being considered.
- 3.18. Robberies during school journeys were partly motivated by the value of mobile phones carried by school children and school children's predictable travel patterns.
- 3.19. The Safe Space Team, which worked with young people at risk of exploitation, had been moved from Children's Services to the Integrated Adolescent Service. The Adolescent Service included social workers with smaller than usual caseloads who would work with looked-after children, children in need and children on child protection plans. If a child was identified as being at risk of entering the criminal justice system, they would be supported by one social worker who would also enable them to access further, wraparound support.
- 3.20. The Council was working to understand and define the cohort of young people most at risk of modern slavery in order to support them sooner via pre-MACE Panels. The National Referral Mechanism Panel was making decisions regarding the risk of childhood modern slavery much quicker than under the previous Home Office Process.
- 3.21. The Council was pressing the Home Office for clarity in respect of the apparent contradictions between recent legislation: the Illegal Migration Act 2023 appeared to preclude people who had entered the country illegally from the protections afforded by the National Referral Mechanism. Locally, there

was significant buy-in from the Police, who had reinstated their team focused on human trafficking.

ACTIONS

1. Director of Communities, Partnerships and Leisure to confirm the number of current serious youth violence cases, broken down by offence type, ethnicity and gender.
2. Director of Communities, Partnerships and Leisure to provide information on the causal factors for robberies during school journeys.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

4. Post-16 and career pathways

Witnesses

Councillor Chris Barnham, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Pinaki Ghoshal, Executive Director for Children and Young People

Ruth Griffiths, Head of Access, Inclusion and Participation

Spike van der Vleit-Firth, Programme Lead for Jobs & Skills

Simon Spearman, Deputy Principal Vocational and Quality – CTK Aquinas Sixth Form

Susan Rowe, Lewisham Education Group and Lewisham Black Parent Forum

Key points from discussion

- 4.1. A Youtube video entitled *Post 16 options in Lewisham*, in which Lewisham students gave an overview of A Levels, BTECs, Apprenticeships and NVQS, and T Levels, was shown.
- 4.2. The Head of Access, Inclusion and Participation highlighted Lewisham's low NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training figures). About 40 per cent of young residents stayed in the borough for Sixth Form.
- 4.3. Simon Spearman noted CTK Aquinas was in its second year of delivering T Levels. It had expanded its offer that year and was to expand it further in the next year.
- 4.4. It was important to promote T Levels as BTECS were to be phased out.
- 4.5. The Lewisham T Level Forum enabled collaboration between providers to collectively offer a good range of subjects. The Council had facilitated meetings with employers such as the NHS, which had been helpful as employers were not yet sufficiently familiar with T Levels and the required 45-day placement.
- 4.6. The Programme Lead for Jobs and Skills noted the Council received a lot of referrals for employment support. Lewisham Works was to promote options to 18-25 year olds in the Autumn and aimed to support 100 young people into EET by the end of the year. There were no formal eligibility criteria for support.
- 4.7. The Council's apprenticeship programme was performing well. Sixty-seven of the four-year 250 apprenticeships target had been delivered to date.

4.8. The Council was to invest in Care Leaver internships and commission specialist Care Leaver employment support.

The Committee and its guests put questions to the witnesses. Key points raised included:

4.9. The Council was to invest in Care Leaver internships and commission specialist Care Leaver employment support.

4.10. The NEET figures were accurate. The Access, Inclusion and Participation Service tracked the 6,500-person cohort throughout the academic year. Year 8 to 10 census data were monitored and attendance was tracked at Year 11. The Service had a good relationship with local providers to ensure it was familiar with those who were at risk of dropping out. Providers were good at providing data and information was shared between local authorities and out-of-borough colleges. The data were cleansed regularly ahead of submissions to the Department for Education. The Council usually met its annual targets in respect of the number of young people whose EET status was unknown.

4.11. Ten 16-17 year olds were receiving universal credit.

4.12. As the Council was expanding pre-16 educational provision for young people with additional needs, there was a need to expand post-16 provision. There was also specific provision for learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder in non-specialist settings and out-of-borough options.

4.13. The Council tracked electively home educated residents' participation and offered them the same post-16 support and opportunities. Further, there was a specific pre-16 GCSE programme at Lewisham College to encourage home educated young people to progress into further education at post-16.

4.14. T Levels were rigorous academic courses with exams and vocational placements. While more needed to be done to promote T Levels nationally, students who were well-supported by their provider would progress on to higher education or employment smoothly.

4.15. The statutory duty to provide impartial careers and education information, advice and guidance sat with education settings, unlike historically. The Council provided settings with the full range of information, but it could not guarantee it was passed on, and was encouraging young people to be remain in borough for their post-16 education, as it was for secondary education.

4.16. Schools could offer T Levels but infrastructure costs could be prohibitive, as the courses required the creation of professional environments, such as mock hospital wards, which were hard to install in school buildings.

4.17. The government was providing capital funding for education settings to introduce the facilities required for T Levels, but it was unclear for how long that would be provided.

4.18. It was noted that the Lewisham Challenge was broader than the Oxbridge programme and offered exposure to a range of sectors and apprenticeships. Schools and Goldsmiths University funded Lewisham Challenge and the Council was seeking partner funding.

4.19. While the Council did not have responsibility for promoting apprenticeships and other alternative opportunities, it promoted them through a number of avenues.

- 4.20. A lack of education and training options relating to emerging sectors – such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing and green technologies – was noted.
- 4.21. There were pockets of opportunity for mentoring in Lewisham, but the challenge was to bring it together with limited resource.
- 4.22. The Baseline Service advised education settings on accommodating young people’s employment. Realism was needed regarding the extent to which learners could undertake employment while in full-time education.
- 4.23. The amount of maintenance support provided for further education learners was lower than historically and was provided to education settings, which could choose how it was spent, which was not monitored.

Standing orders were suspended for 15 minutes at 9.24pm.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

(a) Publications relating to Item 4

RESOLVED

That the reports be noted.

5. School Admissions 2022/23

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

6. Exclusions and Managed Transfers Annual Report, 2022/23

- 6.1. The Chair noted that Committee members could send written questions regarding information items to the Children and Young People Directorate via the Scrutiny Manager. Members requested comparator data on managed transfers if available; and that the data in the three for information reports be provided in graphical format where possible.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

7. Lewisham Attendance and Children Missing Education

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

8. Select Committee work programme

- 8.1. The Chair suggested an item on Family Hubs be taken at a future meeting.

RESOLVED

That the budget proposals item scheduled for November 2023 be replaced with an item regarding holistic school improvement.

The meeting ended at 9.36 pm

Chair:

Date:
